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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002620

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2025

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TNA PETITION PROTESTS JAFARI REQUEST FOR MNF-I
EXTENSION

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford.
Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary. A bloc of 83 TNA legislators presented a petition June 19 protesting the Jafari government's call for an extension of the MNF-I mandate. Several Sadrists promoting the petition argued that a timeline for withdrawal would reduce the legitimacy of the insurgency. Many of the petition signatories, however, appeared to be protesting that the TNA was not consulted in the decision, not the MNF-I extension itself. End Summary.

2. (C) Leading Sadrist representative Falah Shanshal announced a petition protesting the extension of the MNF-I mandate at the June 19 TNA session. He pointed out that with 83 signatories and only 130 members of the TNA present at that day's session, the petition represented a bloc with commanding legislative authority. Our subsequent conversations with TNA members revealed that many signatories were protesting the Jafari government's decision-making process, not the decision itself. The majority of the signatories appear to be following the first of the following two motivations:

-- OBJECTING TO A VIOLATION OF THE TAL: Many of the signatories to the petition appear to have been protesting the TNA's exclusion from the decision-making process, not the decision itself. They pointed to TAL Article 39 (A), which states that the "international treaties and agreements" must pass from the council of ministers to the presidency council before being ratified by the TNA. (Comment: Embassy legal counsel has concluded that the call for an extension of a UNSCR mandate, as made by FM Zebari, was legal. TAL Article 39 does not cover a request for the extension of the UNSCR mandate. End Comment)

-- CALLING FOR A TIMELINE: Some 26 Sadrists who most likely backed the petition appear to have been making a larger political statement. Shanshal told Poloff that he believed the absence of a withdrawal timeline spreads fears that the MNF-I presence would continue indefinitely. He said these fears were feeding support for the insurgency. Shanshal also said he believed a pressing timeline would motivate the U.S. to train Iraqi forces more urgently. He said he was pushing for a phased withdrawal as Iraqi forces are trained, not an immediate pullout. Poloff told Shanshal that a timeline for MNF-I withdrawal would actually motivate the insurgency, not demoralize it. Shanshal responded that he heard press reports that several U.S. congressmen shared his position.

Comment

3. (C) This challenge to the MNF-I presence is significant but less alarming than it appears. Many of the signatories to the petition probably support the MNF-I extension but oppose that the TNA was not consulted. Those who support legislation for a timeline appear to still be a minority in the TNA. Shia Political Council Member Ali Yoshua, himself a signatory to the petition, urged Poloff not to over-interpret the document. He said he and others had signed the document to send a warning to Jafari, not the USG.

4. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

Satterfield